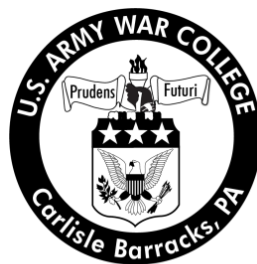# Broadening Leaders? Culture Change as the Cure

by

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Class of 2012

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BROADENING LEADERS? CULTURE CHANGE AS THE CURE

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The value of broadening or non-traditional assignments as part of leader development has been recognized by the Army for decades. The current Chief of Staff of the Army has directed the Army to broaden leaders to develop the skills needed to deal with uncertainty, assist in developing "flexible adaptable leaders" at the junior level and help to develop the attributes required of the Army's future senior leaders. Army senior leaders have consistently said that broadening assignments were the most instrumental in their own development as leaders. Despite the acknowledged importance of broadening assignments, Army culture continues to focus on tactical assignments and often discourages its officers from pursuing broadening developmental assignments. Implementation of three small changes to the Army's current officer personnel management system could easily force a change in the Army's "muddy boots culture" and would incentivize broadening assignments. By changing the composition of key promotion and selection boards; implementing systems that require brigade commanders to send their top performing junior officers to non-traditional assignments; and modifying the current assignment cycle process to include a mechanism that

formally identifies talent, the Army muddy boots culture would adjust and the Army would move to value broadening assignments as part of leader development.

BROADENDING LEADERS? CULTURE CHANGE AS THE CURE

The value of non-traditional or broadening assignments as part of leader development for Army officers has already been established through decades of discussion and debate.[1] A multitude of academic and military research studies, papers, and books has captured the importance of broadening assignments.[2] Army senior leaders have repeatedly stated the value of broadening assignments in leader development and even acknowledged that broadening assignments were the most important in their own development and the most instrumental in preparing them for their current assignments as senior leaders.[3] Lastly, the past three Chiefs of Staff of the Army have said that leader development and "broadening leaders" was one of their top priorities.[4] All three of these CSAs have, since 2009, directed the Army to "broaden leaders" through assignment of officers to broadening assignments.

Despite the acknowledgement of the value of broadening assignments in developing knowledge, skills and experience that allow our officers to deal with uncertainty and prepare them for senior level leadership positions in the Army and despite the fact that assigning officers to broadening assignments has been one of the Chief of Staff of the Army's top priorities for years, it still has not been implemented. Many both inside and outside the Army will argue that the past ten years of fighting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have prevented implementation of the CSAs directive to "broaden leaders" because operational requirements have been the priority. Nevertheless, the problem of assigning top officers to broadening assignments has been an issue for decades – long before the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.[5] Why has the Army not developed a system that assigns its top officers to broadening

assignments? What is impeding implementation of the CSA's directive to broaden our

leaders? How do we quickly, effectively and, most importantly, feasibly implement a

change to our current personnel systems that allows us to broaden leaders?[6]

Background: The Army's Current Officer Professional Developmental Timeline

Before looking at the root causes for failing to assign our officers to broadening assignments and presenting solutions that allow our officers to benefit from these assignments, we first need to understand our current officer developmental model.[7] While most of us serving in the Army are familiar with this timeline, we need to clearly understand the logic behind it and the constraints imposed by it as this is key in understanding the role that Army culture plays in preventing and often discouraging its officers to seek broadening assignments.

The current officer developmental timeline for Army basic branch officers and the requirements for branch qualification at both the captain and major ranks presents two opportunities or "windows" for assigning officers to broadening assignments before they are eligible for battalion command.[8] The first is after the officer has completed the Captains Career Course (CCC) and a branch qualifying assignment as a captain (normally company command for basic branch officers) and before attendance to Intermediate Level Education (ILE) upon promotion to major. The second opportunity is after branch qualification as a major and before selection for battalion command. A simplified officer developmental timeline depicting these windows would look like this:
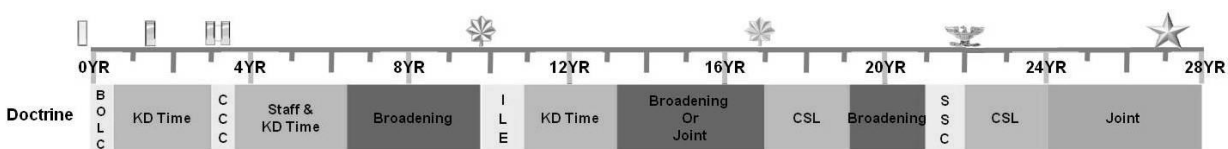
For captains, the time required to serve in branch qualifying assignments varies by branch but is typically 18-24 months. This affords a 3-4 year window after branch qualification as a captain and before the next level of required professional military

education (PME) as a major - ILE at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. If an officer remains in his branch qualifying assignment as a captain longer than 18-24 months or if he is offered a second branch qualifying assignment, the opportunity for him to go to a broadening assignment becomes less likely.

Immediately following ILE, basic branch majors are traditionally assigned back to divisional units to serve as battalion operations officers or battalion executive officers to become branch qualified. As with captain branch qualification, times vary by branch. Typically an officer must serve a minimum of 24 combined months in branch qualifying assignment to be competitive for battalion command.   After branch qualification, officers have their second opportunity or "window" to serve in broadening assignments prior to selection to battalion command.

The very condensed timeline between the ranks of lieutenant colonel and colonel and the 18-24 month requirement for branch qualification as a battalion commander gives officers typically only a 12-24 month window after battalion command to serve in a broadening assignment. As a result, very few of these officers have the opportunity to serve more than 12 months in a broadening assignment after battalion command.

Analysis of the officer professional development timelines of multiple cohorts of battalion commanders, war college classes and even currently serving general officer developmental timelines demonstrates two trends that explain why our officers typically do not serve in broadening assignments until they have become senior leaders (after brigade command)[9]:

1) *Captains (the first window of opportunity)*: Officers complete their required branch qualifying time and then serve in second command assignments or additional branch qualifying assignments as a captain, which eliminates or reduces the opportunity for a broadening assignment after branch qualification and before attendance at ILE.

2) *Majors (the second window of opportunity)*: Officers complete their required branch qualifying assignment and then serve in additional branch qualifying assignments. They typically serve as brigade operations or executive officers after already having served the required 24 months of branch qualifying time at the battalion level.

The effects of these two trends can be seen on the following chart that includes some representative examples of officer developmental timelines:
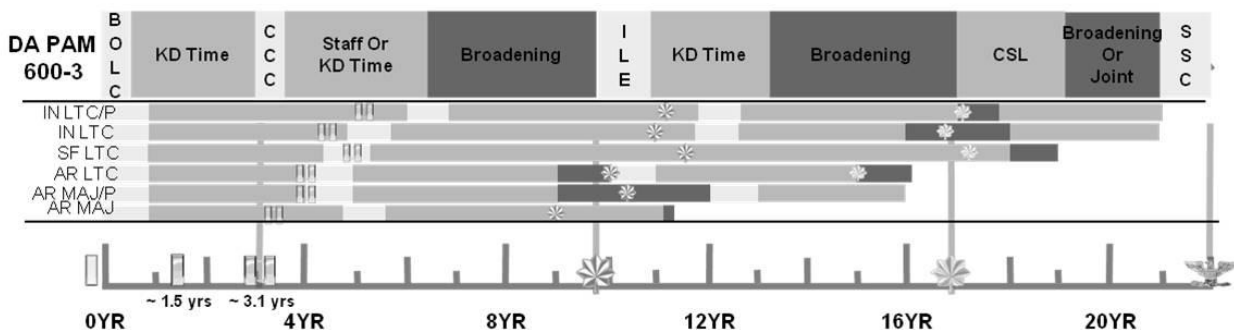
Both of these trends - increased branch qualifying time at the captain and the major level, ultimately limit or prevent broadening assignment opportunities. This point is fundamental in understanding how the Army's muddy boots culture impedes assigning officers to broadening opportunities.

The Army's "Muddy Boots Culture"[10]

In a speech given at the United States Military Academy in February 2011, former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates finished his remarks by telling the audience that his "main worry" and the "greatest challenge" facing the Army was how to break up "the institutional concrete, its bureaucratic rigidity in its assignments and promotion processes, in order to retain, challenge, and inspire its best, brightest, and most-battled tested young officers to lead the service in the future?"[11] The "institutional concrete" that Secretary Gates references is directly attributable to the Army's muddy boots culture. Ultimately, the failure to execute the CSA's directive to "broaden leaders" is a result of how the Army's muddy boots culture implements and distorts our current personnel system. The muddy boots culture results from how the Army defines career success – defined by selection for battalion and brigade command. By looking at the officers selected for battalion and brigade command and their career timelines it becomes clear that the path to command is through repeated success at traditional tactical assignments.[12] Based on the Army's historical data on the career paths of those selected to command battalions, current battalion and brigade commanders rightfully coach their top officers that to be competitive for battalion and future brigade command, they need to remain in branch qualifying (tactical) assignments as long as possible.[13] The assignment histories of these same current battalion and brigade commanders reinforce the perception – repeated tactical assignments in lieu of risking broadening assignments is the path to career success that selection boards have incentivized based on their historical results. Naturally current battalion and brigade commanders want their best officers to be selected for command in the future; these commanders

see themselves as taking care of their top performers and ultimately the Army as an institution.

The Army's muddy boots culture is not a new phenomenon. In 1994, RAND conducted a study in which it referenced an "action bias" among the Army as an organization. The RAND study explained "action bias" as officers saw the path to future career progression came through successful assignments at the tactical level. The study concluded that this "action bias" resulted in "an impoverishment of essential skills in resource allocation, policy development, and programming," skills required of Army senior leaders, because officers did not pursue broadening development assignments. The survey found that the "action bias" was "seriously disadvantaging the Army in its competition for budgetary dollars with other services, which expressly sought leaders with such relevant experience [through assignment to non-traditional jobs as junior officers]."[14]

In his 1998 book, "The Downsized Warrior: America's Army in Transition", David McCormick describes a muddy boots culture within the Army that defines success as selection for battalion command: a requirement for brigade command and future positions in the Army as a senior leader after brigade command. McCormick says that the path to success in the muddy boots culture is multiple tactical level assignments. The perception perpetuated by the muddy boots culture is the more time spent in tactical assignments with troops, the better an officer's chance of being selected for battalion command.[15]

In 2000, Stephen K. Scroggs did an extensive research study on the poor relationship between the Army and Congress. In his dissertation, Scroggs directly

attributes Army culture as the main reason why the Army is not effective on Capitol Hill in its dealings with Congress. He states that the Army's muddy boots culture actually discourages the pursuit of broadening assignments – the "narrow definition or path of career success for Army officers discourages experiences in Washington."[16] This culture leads to an inability, at the senior leader level, to be successful advocates for the Army and contributes to the perception by members of Congress, Congressional staffers and senior leaders of the other services that Army officers are not effective.[17]

> According to senior flag officers interviewed, both retired and active duty, the Army experiences problems in communicating to external audiences like Congress because: (1) institutionally it fails to assign its most competitive junior and senior officers to those positions; (2) it does not promote or give field command opportunities to those with legislative experience, limiting the positive cross-fertilization benefit of their experiences to the larger institution; and (3) as a service, it fails to appreciate and provide its officer corps with the skills and experience to effectively work with Congress and other external audiences.[18]

Scroggs' book includes extensive interviews with former Chiefs of Staff of the Army, including Generals Bernard W. Rogers, Edward C. Meyer and Carl E. Vuono. All three of these CSAs emphatically recommend that the Army should send its best officers to positions in Washington D.C, particularly to the Office of the Chief Legislative Liaison (OCLL), early in their careers where they can develop the skills necessary to be advocates for the service as senior leaders. These general officers state that the Army's failure to do this results from its personnel system that has a narrowly defined path of career success and perpetuates the muddy boots culture.[19]

A 2002 RAND study, conducted for the Army entitled "Preparing Potential Senior Army Leaders for the Future" came to a similar conclusion about the Army's muddy

boots culture. The report states "From the perspective of operational experience, the data in this study seem to indicate that the way to the top for combat arms officers is to focus on Army assignments." [20]

Another study on the organizational culture of the Army conducted by the Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute in 2010 found that "an organization's culture unconsciously guides the professional development and education of those members who will become the senior leaders, and eventually the professional elite of the profession, in such a manner that these future leaders may be inadequately prepared to lead the profession toward future success"[21] The Army's muddy boots culture perpetuates itself.

In a 2011 Op-Ed, Dr. Leonard Wong, a research professor at the Strategic Studies Institute makes exactly the same observation of the effect the muddy boots culture has on preventing our top officers from pursuing non-traditional assignments, specifically joint assignments. In his piece, "Where Have All the Army Generals Gone?", Dr. Wong argues that the Army's senior leaders are underrepresented at the most senior levels of the Department of Defense – specifically as Combatant Commanders. He attributes this to Army officers not serving on joint staffs [non-traditional assignments] early in their careers as captains and majors. Often, Army officers serve in their first joint assignment after brigade command as senior colonels.[22] Dr. Wong concludes by saying:

> In discussions with dozens of up-and-coming senior Army officers…I have noticed another troubling trend in the Army officer corps that is potentially more detrimental to the Army's ability to lead at the strategic level — a growing disdain in Army officers for any leadership position away from

troops. Army officers have always shied away from bureaucratic billets —
preferring to command soldiers in the field.[23]

Dr. Wong's argument is validated by the research studies listed above and through

examination of the Army's current joint fill rates for colonels, lieutenant colonels and

majors. According to the Army's December 2011 data on joint assignments, the Army is

authorized 50 joint assignments for colonels but manages to fill 71 – a 142% fill rate. In

contrast, the Army only fills 83% of its joint assignments for lieutenant colonels and 25%

of its joint assignments for majors.[24]

Another current snapshot that reinforces the continued and recent prevalence of

the muddy boots culture is the analysis of the officer professional developmental

timelines of three groups: 1) officers selected for battalion command during fiscal year

2011, 2) the Army War College class of 2011-2012, and 3) currently serving armor and

infantry general officers. That analysis highlights that the trend of avoiding broadening

assignments, reinforced by the Army's muddy boots culture, continues to be a problem.

It remains just as prevalent, if not more so, after a decade of fighting wars in Iraq and

Afghanistan.

For decades the Army's muddy-boots, tactical only, action bias culture has

discouraged officers from pursuing broadening assignments, which our current general

officers view as the most important to their own development as senior leaders. To fix

the problem of assigning our best officers to broadening assignments and equipping

them with the skills and developmental experiences they will need as future senior

leaders. The solution is as simple as implementing small changes to our current

personnel system that will have an immediate effect on changing the Army's muddy boots culture.[25]

Requirements for Culture Change[26]

By using current organizational and culture change theory, changing the Army's muddy boots culture requires three things to be successful.[27] First, it has to be top down driven: the leaders at the top have to recognize the value of change, in this case broadening assignments, and direct it.[28] Second, the value of the change must be recognized by the organization: Army officers need to "see" that promotion and selection boards recognize the value of these broadening assignments through the results of who these boards select.[29] Third, the value of the change has to be recognized and advocated by those who can implement the change, our commanders at the battalion and brigade level and by our career managers at Human Resources command.[30] These two groups, commanders and career managers, have the most direct impact on the assignment decisions of our junior officers – our captains and majors.

Top Down Driven

Dr. Elizabeth Kier, in her authoritative book on military culture during the inter-war period, says that once the "initial hurdle of recognizing that a change in an organization's culture is necessary…it should be easier to impose a change in the military's culture."[31] This "initial hurdle" of recognizing a need for change has already happened; it happened in 2009 when the 36th Chief of Staff of the Army, General George Casey released the Army Leader Development Strategy (ALDS). In that

document GEN Casey said that the Army has become "out of balance in preparing our leaders for full spectrum operations" and that the Army was "out of balance in building a bench of leaders not only through operational experience but also through professional military education and assignment in broadening experiences".[32] The ALDS directed the Army to broaden its leaders. GEN Casey's successor, the 37th Chief of Staff of the Army, GEN Martin Dempsey continued to make broadening leaders a top priority. In an article entitled "Building Critical Thinkers", GEN Dempsey said that the Army was not "moving aggressively to adapt personnel policies, take a new look at professional military education and re-examine leader attributes to account for what we've learned in recent conflict and modify career patterns to provide opportunities for broadening opportunities for our leaders"[33]. GEN Dempsey continued that

> we must create the right opportunities for leaders to gain experiences outside of the operational Army. Critical assignments such as duty in a combatant command or service on the Joint Staff introduce an officer to joint operations and allow him to manage and confront complex problems at both the operational and strategic levels of war. Such assignments are especially valuable to senior Army leaders when addressing strategic challenges in joint and interagency contexts.[34]

Secretary Gates reinforced the importance of broadening assignments in his farewell speech to the cadets at West Point by giving them the following advice:

> In addition to the essential troop command and staff assignments, you should look for opportunities that in the past were off the beaten path, if not a career dead end – and the institutional Army should not only tolerate, but encourage you in the effort. Such opportunities might include further study at grad school, teaching at this or another-first rate university, spending time at a think tank, being a congressional fellow, working in a different government agency, or becoming a foreign area specialist.[35]

In his initial guidance to the field, our current Chief of Staff, GEN Raymond T. Odierno listed a bullet entitled "Adapt Leader Development & Manage Talent." Under that bullet he said, "Broaden Leaders: *CSA directed*, board guidance, culture change."[36]

Value of Change Recognized by the Organization

Over a decade ago the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) conducted a research study, "American Military Culture in the Twenty-First Century." The CSIS study highlighted that culture is, among other things, the "accumulated experience of the service"; thus, it tends to reinforce existing ways of doing business."[37] One of the studies key findings on improving leader development was that leader selection systems (promotion and selection systems) were "the heart of the matter" and "intimately tied" to military culture, but change did not "seem to be backed by the type of institutional momentum necessary to force significant change."[38] Secretary Gates comment from a February 2011 speech at the United States Military Academy helps to explain why. He said that "the Army will become more adaptive only when being adaptive offers the surest path to promotion."[39]

Board results are critically important as they communicate what the Army, as an organization, requires of its officers to continue to the next level. Board results communicate the values and experiences the Army actually recognizes in practice, not just those it espouses in rhetoric. While the Army does not officially release board results to the field, the field easily deduces what the trends are, what assignments are rewarded, and what assignments are not. Board results and our own career paths are what we, as battalion and brigade commanders, use to coach our junior officers on their

career choices.   Board results are the root cause of why, despite the fact that the

Army's senior leaders have directed us to broaden leaders, the Army's tactical level

leaders have continued to perpetuate the muddy boots culture. In fairness, these

commanders are trying to develop future battalion and brigade commanders based on

current promotion and selection board trends. As a result, these commanders

perpetuate the muddy boots.

To change this cycle of perpetuating the muddy boots culture, the Army has to

reward broadening assignments through promotion and command selection boards.

This change requires more than written board guidance from the Army Chief of Staff on

the importance of broadening assignments. This change requires that board members

have the understanding, through their own career experiences, of the importance of

broadening assignments in the development of our future senior leaders.

Recommendation 1: Change the composition of the key promotion and selection boards (promotion board for lieutenant colonel and the battalion command selection board) to recognize the value of non-traditional assignments and change the current organizational definition of career success.[40]

As discussed earlier, successful battalion command is a prerequisite for selection

to brigade command and future assignments as an Army senior leader.   Two boards

are ultimately responsible for selection of officers for battalion command - the first is the

promotion board for lieutenant colonel and the second is the central selection board for

battalion command. The current composition of the board members selected for these

two boards explains how these boards help to perpetuate the muddy boots culture and

why critical broadening developmental assignments are often avoided by the force.

The promotion board to lieutenant colonel and the selection board for battalion command have a total of 17 members. One is a general officer and the other 16 are colonels.[41] The majority of the colonels sitting as board members will have had few, if any, broadening assignment experiences. Most of these colonels have just begun their transition to Army senior leadership positions. Unlike Army two, three and four star general officers, these colonels have not had the time or assignment experience to fully understand or appreciate the value of broadening assignments to their professional development as senior leaders. They have been successful and advanced to the current level in their careers by following the muddy boots culture model which was rewarded by their promotion and selection boards. The colonels sitting on these boards have spent most of their careers at the tactical level in troop assignments. As they progressed through their careers as junior officers, they were coached to avoid broadening assignments because success at traditional tactical assignments was the path to battalion and brigade command. These colonels, naturally select future senior leaders in their own image, an image that was successful for them and contributed to them becoming senior leaders. As a result, we continue to perpetuate the muddy boots culture and discourage assignment to broadening assignments.

The solution to this problem is simple - change the composition of these two key boards. If broadening assignments and experiences are important in the development of "flexible-adaptable" officers and future senior leaders, then senior leaders who have had the time and assignment experiences to understand their value must be on these boards. Board results ultimately reflect the value associated with broadening assignment experiences through the selection of officers who took risks and pursued

them.[42] Board results, as discussed earlier, communicate to the field what is important

for success.[43] By changing the composition of board members for promotion and

selection boards, the Army can start the process of dismantling the muddy boots culture

and rewarding broadening developmental assignments.

Value of Change Recognized and Advocated by Those Who Can Implement the Change

Recommendation 2: Require brigade commanders to send their top performing captains and majors to non-traditional assignments during the limited windows of opportunity that they have after branch qualifying assignments.

As discussed earlier, currently battalion and brigade commanders coach their top

performing officers to "stay tactical" as long as possible, despite the CSA's directive to

"broaden leaders." For instance, a 2011 survey by the Center for Army Leadership

found that 7 of 10 company grade officers were never counseled by their commanders

to seek duty opportunities outside their career fields and that half of field grade officers

were never counseled by their commanders to seek duty opportunities outside their

career fields.[44] Battalion and brigade commanders and even assignment officers at

Human Resources Command often discourage broadening assignments because of the

career risks involved. There is nothing malicious about this; based on current board

trends it makes sense that these talented brigade and battalion commanders would

want their best to succeed and become future senior leaders in the Army. Also, brigade

and battalion commanders view their officers' careers through a small snapshot of time

that equates with their own time in command. As would be expected, brigade and

battalion commanders would want the top performing officers to remain in their units

throughout their command tenure.

An article for the Association of the United States Army claims that changing this

trend is relatively simple:

> It is not necessary or even desirable to give any special advantages to
> officers with advanced civil schooling or other broadening experiences. It
> is enough simply to stop discouraging officers from pursuing broadening
> experiences. The benefits from their broadening experiences should
> appear as value added in their operational performance.[45]

As promotion and selection boards begin to consistently reward those officers who

pursue broadening assignments, the value associated with these assignments will be

communicated to the field through promotion and command selection results.

Consequently, battalion and brigade commanders will gradually become advocates for

broadening assignments. In the interim, brigade commanders should be required to

nominate a percentage of their top officers for selection to broadening developmental

assignments. These nominations should become part of a formalized process that

identifies the Army's top performers early in their careers and assigns them to

broadening assignments.

**Recommendation 3: Identify talent in our junior officers early in a formalized and
centralized fashion that ensures our top performers and potential future senior
leaders have the opportunity of broadening assignments between required
developmental assignments by implementing a semi-annual talent management
review as part of a semi-annual assignment cycle process.**

Currently the Army uses quarterly assignment cycles to assign officers. This

procedure follows Department of the Army manning guidance, which prioritizes valid

Army requirements. Individual branch assignment officers at the Army's Human

Resources Command assign officers to broadening assignments based on assignment

requirements, priority and availability. As part of the assignment cycle process, there is

no formal system for identifying top performing officers and assigning them to critical

developmental broadening assignments. Each branch (or even assignment officer) has its own rationale and selection process for the officers it assigns to broadening assignments. Quarterly manning cycles were previously understandable because of the changing and unpredictable operational requirements of Iraq and Afghanistan. Now, quarterly manning cycles are no longer required and, in fact, quarterly manning cycles are reactive to short term requirements; they do not force long term officer career development planning and limit assignment predictability. Most importantly, they do not incorporate any processes for talent management of the Army's officer corps. Semi-annual talent management reviews, in conjunction with semi-annual assignment cycles, would allow the Army to methodically assign top performing officers to broadening assignments.

Talent management, particularly for key broadening assignments, is currently done at the individual branch assignment officer and branch chief level. Talent management and assignment to broadening assignments is also currently done, both formally and informally, by direct general officer involvement in individual officer assignments through name requests for individual officers. These "by name requests" for officers and directed brigade commander recommendations (as discussed in recommendation 2) should be incorporated into a semi-annual talent management review as part of a semi-annual assignment cycle process. Thus, Army could implement measures that force strict adherence to branch qualifying assignment time lines, allowing officers the time for broadening assignments as junior officers.[46] Changing to a semi-annual assignment cycle process and incorporating a formal talent-

management mechanism before the assignment cycle process could easily be immediately implemented.

Conclusion

Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff GEN Martin Dempsey and the Chief of Staff of the Army GEN Raymond T. Odierno have all said that leader development is their #1 priority. This is critically important with the increased complexity of the strategic environment; upcoming budget cuts that require innovative, agile and adaptive leaders; and the Army's need to develop future strategic leaders. The Army has long acknowledged the importance of broadening assignments as a key component in developing future senior leaders. The last three CSAs have directed the Army to broaden its leaders, but the Army's muddy boots culture and its implementation of current personnel system has prohibited implementation of this directive.

Drastic changes to the Army's current personnel system are not only unrealistic but ultimately not required in order to affect cultural change. Small changes to our current officer personnel management system will force the Army's muddy boots culture to change and recognize the value of broadening assignments in leader development. First, change the composition of critical promotion and selection boards to reward talented officers who have succeeded at risky non-traditional assignments as junior officers, signaling to the Army that the organization values these assignments. Second, require brigade commanders to send their top performing junior officers to broadening assignments, immediately breaking the perpetuation of the Army's muddy boots culture. Third, change the frequency of the assignment cycle process and use these

already existing systems in identify and assign top performing officers to broadening

assignments. Implementation of these three relatively simple recommendations can

quickly break the "institutional concrete" and provide our officers the skills and

experiences they will need to deal with an increasing complex and uncertain strategic

environment and develop into effective future senior leaders.

Endnotes

[1] The Army defines broadening assignments as "assignments outside the officer's core branch or functional area." In its definition of broadening, the Army says that broadening assignments are an important piece of the Army's professional development model because they: 1) develop a wider range of knowledge and skills; 2) augment understanding of the full spectrum of Army missions; 3) promote practical application of language training or increase cross-cultural experience; and 4) expand officer awareness of other governmental agencies, units or environments. U.S. Department of the Army, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, DA PAM 600-3*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, February 1, 2010). This definition is incomplete as it fails to link the importance of broadening assignments in the development of strategic leaders. This is complicated by the fact that there is no scientific way to determine what the skills and attributes of strategic leaders should be.

Much has been written about the skills and attributes needed in our senior leaders all of which is subjective and all of which covers every aspect of leadership. As a result, distilling specific skills required in the Army's strategic leaders is difficult, contributing to the difficulty in scientifically illustrating the importance of broadening. For example, the Army's manual on leadership contains a chapter on strategic leadership which includes 41 competencies required for strategic leaders. (FM, 6-21). The Army War College's *Strategic Leader Primer* contains a comprehensive list of 35 attributes required of strategic leaders. This list captures every aspect of leading using the "Be, Know, Do" typology but includes: "comfortable with complexity"; "possesses intellectual sophistication – alternative frames of reference"; "skilled diplomat"; "critical, creative, reflective"; "consensus building across a variety of stakeholders"; and stresses the importance of relationship building. U.S. Army War College. Department of Command, Leadership and Management, *"Strategic Leader Primer,"* http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/dclm/slp3.pdf (accessed December 1, 2012). Dr. Leonard Wong and the Army's Strategic Studies Institute conducted an extensive research study for the Army which included a thorough review of literature written on strategic leadership and also included interviews with senior civilian/corporate and military leaders. Dr. Wong's list of senior leadership competencies is reduced to six meta-competencies which include: identity; mental agility; cross-cultural savvy; interpersonal maturity; world class warrior; and professional astuteness. Leonard Wong, Stephen Gerras, William Kidd, Robert Pricone, and Richard Swengros, *Strategic Leadership Competencies* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2003).

Commonalties between all these lists of attributes are: critical thinking, communication; cultural understanding / empathy; and relationship building (see LTC Kara Soules' 2012 Senior Service College Fellowship article for publication entitled *A Matter of Perspective* for more on empathy). The importance of these four broad traits have been reinforced through discussions with senior leaders on the skills that

have helped them the most in their current assignments as senior leaders and the assignment experiences that helped to develop those skills. By re-looking the Army's definition of broadening, it is clear that all four of the above traits are captured, and that the value the Army places on broadening assignments is directly relevant to development of its future strategic leaders.

[2] Broadening assignments have routinely been used in the business community for leader development and also as a tool for helping to retain talent.   There importance to developing Army leaders and retaining talent has also been widely written about. See Stephen K. Scroggs, *Army Relations with Congress: Thick Armor, Dull Sword, Slow Horse* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000). In Scroggs' book, he interviews several former CSAs on the value of non-traditional assignments. Retaining talent is another benefit of assigning officers to broadening assignments. Business organizations use broadening assignments to assist in retaining talent – top talent understands an organization is willing to invest in their professional development they are more likely to stay as part of that organization. See Tim Kane,"Why Our Best Officers are Leaving," *The Atlantic*, January/February 2011; Renny McPherson, "The Next Petraeus," *Boston Globe*, September 26, 2010 and Andrew Tilghman, "The Army's Other Crisis: Why the Best and Brightest Young Officers are Leaving," *The Washington Monthly*, December 2007: 44-53 for multiple perspective on why junior officers are leaving the Army. As the Armor Branch Chief from 2009-2010, the number one response I received from captains that left the Army was the belief that they did not have the opportunity to pursue broadening assignments that they viewed as both personally and professionally rewarding.

[3] For direct quotes by Army senior leaders on the value of broadening assignments to their development see: Barak A. Salmoni et al, "Growing Strategic Leaders for Future Conflict," *Parameters*, Spring 2010, 72- 88. Salmoni conducted multiple interviews of senior leaders (colonel and above) on what assignments were most important in their development as senior leaders.

[4] GEN George Casey, the 36th CSA, listed "broadening assignments" as a priority in the Army's 2009 Army Leader Development strategy. U.S. Department of the Army, *A Leader Development Strategy for the 21st Century Army* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, November 25, 2009). GEN Martin E. Dempsey, the 37th CSA, discussed the value of nontraditional assignments in a series of articles he wrote as the Training and Doctrine Command Commanding General. See GEN Martin E. Dempsey, "Leader Development," *Army*, February 2011, 25-28 as an example. GEN Raymond T. Odierno, the 38th and current CSA, listed "develop, bold, adaptive and broadened leaders" as a "leader expectation" in his *Marching Orders* to the Army. GEN Raymond Odierno, "Marching Orders" briefing slides, Washington DC, January 2012.

[5] A majority of studies and research used in this paper were written in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

[6] Much has been written on problems and issues with current personnel system.   Many authors recommend a drastic overhaul of our current personnel system which is not only unnecessary but not feasible. For example, see Donald Vandergriff *Manning the Future Legions of the United States: Finding and Developing Tomorrow's Centurions* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008); Donald Vandergriff, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: Mission Command versus the Army Personnel System* (Arlington, VA: Association of the United States Army, 2011) and Donald Vandergriff, *Raising the Bar: Creating and Nuturing Adaptability to Deal with the Changing Face of War* (Washington D.C.: Center for Defense Information, 2006). A problem with implementing the CSA's directive to broaden leaders, which has been studied by the U.S. Army Human Resources Command since the 2009 ALDS was published, is developing solutions that are feasible and can be implemented quickly, using current systems, with minimal personnel policy changes and within the constraints established by DOPMA.

[7] U.S. Department of the Army, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, February 1, 2010).

[8] Some historical trend data that is useful in understanding why the discussion on the officer developmental timeline focuses on pre-battalion command: 1) infantry and armor combat arms officers who do not command battalions are typically not selected for promotion to colonel; 2) combat arms officers who do not get selected to command battalions are typically not selected to attend senior service college; and 3) officers who do not get selected to colonel/SSC typically do not get selection for promotion to general officer.

[9] The author looked at three cohorts of officers and their professional developmental timelines: 1) infantry and armor officers who were eligible for promotion to colonel for FY11; 2) all basic branch officers attending the US Army War College for AY11-12; and 3) infantry and armor general officers. By analyzing the timelines of these different cohorts, trends of "more branch qualifying time" at both the captain and major levels were evident and clearly a reason the majority of these officers (in groups 1 and 2) did not have broadening assignment opportunities until after brigade command. The most common non-traditional assignment for all officers in the three groups analyzed was assignment on a flag officer's personal staff as either an aide-de-camp (typically for junior officers) or as an executive officer (typically for post brigade commanders).

[10] The term "muddy boots culture" is mentioned in several publications referenced as part of the research for this paper. I attribute the term to David McCormick, *The Downsized Warrior: America's Army in Transition* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

Much of the discussion in this paper on the Army's muddy boots culture and its effects on Army officer professional development were the results of multiple conversations between the author and COL Tommy Boccardi while we were serving as branch chiefs at the Army's Human Resources Command. Please see COL Tommy Boccardi's War College research paper entitled *Polyester Culture* which includes a theoretical discussion on Army culture as well as multiple hypotheses on the reasons for the muddy boots culture. COL Thomas Boccardi, *Polyester Culture*, Strategy Research Project (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2011).

[11] Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, "United States Military Academy (West Point) As Delivered by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, West Point, NY, Friday, February 25, 2011," Defense.gov transcript, February 25, 2011, http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1539 (accessed August 26, 2011).

[12] In this paper, tactical assignments are defined as those at the division level and below.

[13] Tactical, branch qualifying assignments for captains are typically company command and for majors are typically serving as battalion and brigade operations officers or executive officers.

[14] Don M. Snider and Llyod J. Matthews, eds, *The Future of the Army Profession*, 2nd ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 75.

[15] McCormick,154.

[16] Scroggs, 2.

[17] Ibid, 20. Scroggs goes on to say: "Most general officers I spoke to believed that the Army's long-term interests require it to make a correction back to a professional development track that ensures its best combat arms officers alternate between troop and Pentagon assignments. Understanding Washington and developing skills in working service and inter-service issues in the Pentagon must parallel the preparation for commanding combat units in the field. According to these interviews, ignoring either could undermine preparation for the resource and readiness challenges of the future. The challenge to the senior Army leadership is to make the two, warfighting competency and Washington

experience, mutually inclusive for future Army leaders." Scroggs goes on to say that most Army officers get their first assignments in Washington DC (specifically the Pentagon) after brigade command.

[18] Ibid, 11.

[19] During an interview conducted by Scroggs, GEN Vuono says "You have to identify a large pool of fast-tracking young officers and closely manage their professional development over the years to facilitate both key Building [Pentagon] and Washington experience assignments and field and troop assignments where the officer is rotated in and out of Washington. You have to build up a corps of young military officers –who are on equal terms with the congressional staffers in terms of respect, who know the staffers, know who on the Hill you need to work, know those who are not worth working, and know those who are effective and ineffective. We need officers who have respected relationships with these staffers, know the Building, can't be snowed and can tell if the staff really knows his business. We have not done a good job of building that corps of young officers…" Scroggs, 11-12.

[20] David E. Johnson, *Preparing Potential Senior Army Leaders for the Future* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2002), 27.

[21] Pierce, 5.

[22] Dr. Leonard Wong, "Op-Ed: Where Have All the Army Generals Gone?", November 15, 2011, Strategic Studies Institute, http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/index.cfm/ articles/where-have-all-the-army-generals-gone/2011/11/15 (accessed November 18, 2011).

[23] Ibid, 2.

[24] Data from the United States Army's Human Resources Command, December 2011.

[25] Organizational change theorists have stated that the biggest impediment to change is organizational culture. See Gareth Jones, *Organizational Theory, Design and Change* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010), 275.

[26] A discussion on the application of organizational theory and culture change theory is beyond the scope of this paper. Both were extensively researched as part of this section. Some of the key business references on organizational and change theory included: Gareth Jones, *Organizational Theory, Design and Change* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010); John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996); Barbara Senior, *Organizational Change* (Harlow, Essex England: Pearson Education, 2010); and Gerald Sentell, *Creating Change-Capable Cultures* (Alcoa, TN: Pressmark International, 1998). For specific information on the application of organizational and culture change theory to the United States Army see Dr. James G. Pierce, *Is the Organizational Culture of the U.S. Army Congruent with the Professional Development of its Senior Level Officer Corps?*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2010) and COL John B. Richardson IV, *Real Leadership and the U.S. Army: Overcoming a Failure of Imagination to Conduct Adaptive Work,* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2011). Dr. Pierce uses an analytical approach, the organizational culture assessment instrument (OCAI), developed by Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn from their book, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture* to show the difference in "espoused" vs. "practiced" cultural differences in the Army, particularly in regard to development of Army senior leaders. COL Richardson references Dr. Edgar H. Schein's work, a professor at MIT's Sloan School of Management, who first applied organizational culture theory to business organizations. Dr. Schein defined culture as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions the group learned as it solved problems….that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems." Also see COL Thomas Boccardi's War College

Strategy Research Project entitled *Polyster Culture* which takes academic research on military culture and applies it to why the Army has had difficulty adapting its personnel system.

[27] Many experts on military culture and innovation say that an external shock is required in order to affect change in a military organization. Organization and culture change theorists Dr. Gerald Sentrell and Dr. John Kotter would disagree and present other ways of affecting change in large organizations which are used in this paper (see end notes below).

[28] Gerald Sentrell, *Creating Change-Capable Cultures* (Alcoa, TN: Pressmark International, 1998), 171. One of Sentrell's central presmises in his book is that "leadership [top leadership] drives culture change". Also see Dr. John Kotter's *Leading Change* – chapter 3 "Establishing a Sense of Urgency", pp. 35-49 and chapter 5 "Developing a Vision and Strategy", pp.67-83 and chapter 6 "Communicating the Change Vision, pp. 85-100.

[29] Kotter, 117. See Dr. Kotter's *Leading Change*, chapter 8 – "Generating Short Term Wins", pp. 117-130.

[30] Kotter, 51. See *Leading Change* chapter 4 - "Creating the Guiding Coalition", pp. 51-66.

[31] Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War (*Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 161.

[32] U.S. Department of the Army, *A Leader Development Strategy for the 21st Century Army,* 2.

[33] GEN Martin E. Dempsey, "Building Critical Thinkers." *Armed Forces Journal,* February 2011, http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2011/02/5663450 (accessed September 15, 2011), 1.

[34] Ibid, 1.

[35] Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates Speech, February 11, 2011.

[36] GEN Raymond Odierno, 38th Army Chief of Staff, "38th CSA Initial Guidance," United States Army, September 11, 2011. GEN Odierno expands on his initial guidance in his recently published January 2012 *Marching Orders.* In that document he lists as one of his priorities to "Adapt leader development to meet our future security challenges in an increasingly uncertain and complex strategic environment" and lists under "Leader Expectations" that the Army needs to "develop bold, adaptive, and broadened leaders".

[37] Center for Strategic and International Studies, *American Military Culture in the Twenty-First Century,* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2000), 49.

[38] Ibid, XXII.

[39] Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates Speech, February 11, 2011.

[40] Many of the recommendations listed here were developed through discussions with COL Tommy Boccardi over the past two years. See COL Tommy Boccardi's Strategy Research Project, *Polyester Culture,* for additional recommendations on how to improve the Army's personnel system through a "short term bridging strategy" that includes six small changes to the current officer personnel system. COL Boccardi also recommends a long term "composite" officer professional developmental model that forces broadening assignments.

[41] Department of the Army. 2011. Memorandum, *FY12 Officer and Enlisted Board Membership Requirements Tasking Matrices.* Washington, DC: Department of the Army, Office the Chief of Staff, G-1, August.

[42] There is also a perception, reinforced by historical data from past promotion and selection boards, that there is risk involved with broadening assignments.   This is based on the fact that evaluation reports from broadening assignments may be written by members of a different service or even by civilians who do not understand how to properly write these reports which may disadvantage officers at promotion or selection boards. Board members have to understand the risks associate with broadening assignments and understand the value of the experience and reasons an officer is selected for that assignment when they review these evaluation reports.

[43] Board results are not officially released to the field but determining these results is not difficult. By a quick analysis of the names of officers selected, officers can quickly determine trends.

[44] CASCAL Survey Riley R., Hatfield, J., Nicely, K., & Keller-Glaze, H., & Steele J.P. (2011). *2010 Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL): Main Findings*

[45] Kent W. Park, *Assembly Line to Custom Design: Reforming the Officer Development System,* (Arlington, VA: Association of the United States Army, 2010), 11.

[46] Semi-annual talent management reviews before semi-annual assignment cycles should incorporate brigade commander recommendations, general officer by name requests, and proponent recommendations. In addition the talent management review could identify officers who have completed or will complete branch qualification requirements during the upcoming semi-annual manning cycle in order to re-assign them to non-traditional development assignments. Initially, Division Commanders, the Commanding General of Human Resources Command, the Army G1 and branch proponent general officers may have to direct and enforce branch qualification timelines.